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Messenger who describes the tragedy to Calpurnia is perfectly correct in his archeology :—

Then Caesar march'd forth to the fatal place ;  
Neere Pompeys Theatre where the Senate was.

And Ben Jonson in *Sejanus*, 1603, and in *Cataline*, 1611, shows his exact knowledge in making the Capitol the Arx or citadel, and in having the Senate meet in any consecrated building. However, Ben Jonson whisks the Senate about to an extent which would seem to exaggerate the facts, for authorities agree that meetings outside the regular Senate house, the Curia Hostilia, now covered by the church of S. Adriano, took place only under special conditions, such as prevailed on the fatal Ides of March.

In *Sejanus*, III, i, Tiberius swears—

By the Capitol  
And all our gods,

and *Cataline*, IV, i, opens in "A Street at the foot of the Capitol."

In *Sejanus*, V, x, the Temple of Apollo is given as the scene of the Senate's meeting, and later in the same scene we have—

*Terentius*. The whilst the senate at the temple of Concord  
Make haste to meet again.

In *Cataline* IV. ii the Praetor says,—

Fathers, take your places.  
Here in the house of Jupiter the Stayer,  
By edict from the consul Marcus Tullius,  
You're met, a frequent senate.

There is something restless and uncomfortable, a certain lack of dignity, in this picture of a peripatetic body, meeting hither and yon all over Rome. Perhaps the early poets and Shakspeare and Heywood had the best of it, romantically speaking, in their imposing vision of an imperial building with high walls and strong, rising above the top of the hill, and the glitter and splendour of the covering of glass and gold and marvellous carved work.

As farre as doth the Capitoll excede  
The meanest house in Rome ; so farre my Sonne  
This Ladies Husband heere, this, (do you see)  
Whom you have banish'd, does exceed you all.  
*Coriolanus*, IV. ii, 39-42.

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*Molière*. A Biography. By H. C. CHATFIELD-TAYLOR. Dutton and Co., New York, 1906.

Unlike Shakespeare, Molière is so well accounted for, both as a poet and as a man, that a genuine Molière-question has never existed. Though there has been much theorizing on the nature of his art, speculative criticism has had little concern with the main facts of his life, or with that favorite theme of critics, the order of his works. Contemporary chronicle, allusions laudatory and libelous, the *Life* by Grimarest in 1705, and the very valuable 'Registre' of the actor La Grange—are quite sufficient to explain all essential points in his career. Thus, the biographer's task here would appear simple, were it not that biography depends as much on interpretation as on document, and that good interpreters are rare. As Renan once said to Tennyson : "la vérité est dans une nuance." To wring from the documents this illusive quality, to give to each detail its proper shade or color, and thereby to reanimate the facts—this in itself requires analytic and imaginative powers of a high order.

Apparently Mr. Chatfield-Taylor is alive to this responsibility, for he attempts, above all, to reconstruct the personality of Molière. As he states in his preface, his intention is to interpret, for English readers, "Molière's life by his plays and his plays by his life." One cannot quarrel with him for thus delimiting his subject. He has chosen the kernel from which all study of the poet should proceed ; and—it may at once be said—he has handled his subject in a stimulating way. We are given a vivid picture of the poet's early surroundings : his father's comfortable bourgeois-home in the rue St. Honoré, and the respectable but cramped existence for which it stood ; of the young Poquelin's longing for greater freedom, and his consequent flight to the stage. Then follow his period of apprenticeship with the 'Illustre Théâtre' and its light-hearted companions—the Béjarts, the storm-and-stress years in the provinces, so fertile in experience : as comedian first to the Duke of Épernon and then to the Prince of Conti, that fickle friend of Molière's school-days. And finally we read of the return to Paris, the 'Précieuses Ridicules' in 1659, the poet's worldly success and the friendship of the King,

the culmination of a momentous struggle in 'Tartuffe,' and the sudden heroic death. All of these events, a drama in themselves, Mr. Taylor sets vividly before the mind's eye, adorned with ample incident and anecdote, and expressed in an interesting and often brilliant style.

If there is a general criticism to be made of Mr. Taylor's treatment, it is that his enthusiasm, a valuable asset in a biography, often oversteps the mark and inspires statements difficult of substantiation. As when he speaks of the trio—Louis XIV, Mazarin and Molière—as "the greatest despot, the greatest knave, and the greatest genius of France." Or, again, when comparing 'Tartuffe,' 'Don Juan' and the 'Misanthrope,' he refers to the last-mentioned as "the greatest unit in this trilogy of unrivalled brilliance." Or in citing, without proper qualifying adjectives, the opinion of Coquelin that Molière is Shakespeare's "equal in fecundity, his superior in truth." Such statements are not only unscholarly, being incapable of proof, but prejudice an argument which is otherwise logical and, in general, convincing.

To consider more specific questions: Mr. Taylor takes the subjective view that Molière's plays are mainly an expression of his own life, an epitome of his personal experience. This playwright, we are made to think, is distinctive in that he placed his personal and family history on the boards for public contemplation. It is doubtless true that Molière, like Shakespeare and Goethe, blended his life with his art, incorporating into his works bits of his own experience. And yet, probably no great writer ever generalized more on mankind in order to render men broadly and permanently human.<sup>1</sup> Superiority over self is the mark of a great soul, and it is one of the traits of genius to transcend the bounds of personality and become universal. Boileau's favorite expression for Molière was: "le grand contemplateur"; whereby he meant not that his eye was turned inwardly upon himself but outwardly on the world of men in which he lived. Thus, though the 'Misanthrope' may in parts reflect the misogyny of the lover of Armande Béjart, Alceste is preëminently

the sentimentalist ill at ease in the indifferent, intellectual atmosphere of court circles. That is why the character appealed so strongly to the Rousseau of a later age, but evoked so little sympathy from the poet's contemporaries. Comedy, as George Meredith so convincingly points out in his well-known essay, is distinctly the product of society; and it is from a deep and broad observation of the great society about him that Molière's comedies arose. Few critics, it seems, will therefore admit with Mr. Taylor, that Mascarille, Eraste, Alceste and Argan "are, part by part, Molière himself, concealed little more than the ostrich with its head in the sand."

Molière's relationship to Louis XIV is set forth in Chapter ix, perhaps the most interesting chapter in the book, and certainly one of the most important. This curious friendship between the absolute sovereign and the social outcast—for an actor was necessarily that—has always been a favorite theme of discussion. After reviewing the opinion of others, Mr. Taylor cleverly escapes the dilemma by saying: "it was the talent of the one to kindle, and of the other to be warmed by, the fire of honest fun which made these geniuses of comedy and kingship understand each other." In other words, he repeats that typically French apothegm: "ce qui produit la familiarité, ce ne sont pas les douleurs partagées, c'est la gaieté en commun," but leaves the real question unexplained. For it seems probable that Louis did not regard his comedian as any ordinary jester, and that his sympathy for him sprang from a deeper source than mere laughter—from some sincere emotional or intellectual kinship with him. Molière, we know, was a disciple of Rabelais and Montaigne. His life shows his unswerving confidence in Nature as the soul's guide. Obey the law of your own being, "fais ce que voudras"—as Rabelais had said—and the problem of existence is solved. It is unnecessary to elaborate the point. Thus it becomes evident at once why the youthful Molière was drawn to Lucretius. He was an epicurean in an age of formalism. But was not Louis just as free? A moulder of convention for lesser men, he himself obeyed the impulses of genius; whereas Molière reflected convention as in a mirror. Hence a common spiritual freedom united the two men. Now, as

<sup>1</sup> The question of Molière's subjectivity is ably discussed by Ph. Aug. Becker in the *Zeitsch. für vergl. Literaturgeschichte*, xvi (1905), pp. 194-221. See, also, E. Rigal, *Revue d'histoire litt.*, ix (1904), pp. 1-21.

long as Molière ridiculed the foibles of humanity, Louis could but rejoice. It must have pleased him to have his whimpering marquesses held up to scorn. But when with 'Tartuffe' the mighty fabric of the church was shaken, the King was compelled to protest, for the church was the mainstay of his realm. And so it happened, for political rather than personal reasons that Louis withdrew his public support from Molière after 1669.

Mr. Taylor has the usual Saxon preference for the 'Misanthrope,' which to him represents the apogee of Molière's power. However excellent this play may be, it is questionable whether Molière's power ever waned; in the opinion of many he died in his intellectual prime. It is worth noting also that M. Coquelin, whom Mr. Taylor cites in another connection, places 'Don Juan' at the head of the poet's plays (*International Quarterly*, 1903, pages 60 ff.). Certainly the latter comedy has something Shakespearian in its breadth and scope, without lacking any of its creator's sense of reality. M. Coquelin further makes clear Don Juan's similarity to Richard III—the great difference being that Don Juan's weapon is impertinence and that Richard's is irony. This trait explains Don Juan's pretended hypocrisy, the stumbling-block of so many Molière commentators, with whom Mr. Taylor here allies himself. In addition, the analogy of 'Tartuffe' and the 'Malade Imaginaire,' which Mr. Taylor mentions, is upheld by a comparison of Argan with Organ, the former of whom seeks to insure the welfare of his body, the latter that of his soul as well,—both being types of extreme selfishness.

From minor errors of detail the book is singularly free. M. Abel Lefranc<sup>2</sup> has recently made out a good case for dating the 'Étourdi' in 1655, instead of 1653 as Mr. Taylor argues. The Arnauld d'Andilly mentioned on page 213 is evidently a slip for Antoine Arnauld, who was the true leader of the Port-Royalists. The Bibliography, which contains only works that had been specially consulted in preparation of the book, should, it seems, have included: Coquelin's essay mentioned above, Brunetière's article<sup>3</sup> on the

philosophy of Molière, Weiss's lectures<sup>4</sup> on him, and Stapfer's 'Molière et Shakespeare'<sup>5</sup>—all of which are of general interest and value.

On the whole, the work is very well done, down to the minor details of execution. In this the biographer, the illustrator and the printer all had a share. Professor Crane, whose pupil Mr. Taylor was, contributes an interesting introduction. In closing, be it said that the blank-verse translations of Mr. Taylor are the best rendering we have of Molière in English. Let us hope that he will see fit to complete them, so that English literature may permanently possess the masterpieces of the greatest modern comic genius.

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*Molière*, by MR. H. C. CHATFIELD-TAYLOR.

Duffield and Company, New York, 1906. xxv and 446 pages.

To many a reader of this *Life of Molière* will undoubtedly come the question which occurred to the present writer: Why did not some *Fachmann* write this book? Whatever the answer to this question may be, here is a great opportunity lost, for the work is so written that it may well be called definitive.

The author's aim has been "to tell the story of Molière's life to English readers . . . to interpret Molière's life by his plays and his plays by his life, rather than write an exhaustive criticism of his dramatic works." It is true, the book is not an attempt to catalogue and analyse fully the Italian, Spanish, or Latin sources of all the plays that lend themselves to this treatment. Faithful to the object he set out to attain, the author does not wander very far from Molière's life. Yet a deal of this source-discussion is scattered through the book. Some of the foreign sources have been only cursorily indicated, but there is enough information on this subject given to suit all the purposes of the ordinary seminar work in Molière. Besides, there is exhaustive criticism in more than

<sup>2</sup> *Revue des Cours et Conférences*, 15th year, 1st series, 1906.

<sup>3</sup> In his *Études crit. sur l'histoire de la littérature française*, 4e ser., 1891, pp. 179-242.

<sup>4</sup> Paris, 1900 (Calmann Levy).

<sup>5</sup> 5th ed., Paris, 1905.